1: Tew E-4 (no date) 1950 FT7 Yao FT7

every adult member is a matrilineal descendant of a single ancestress, or a spouse of one of these people. All husbands are called *alamu* by the male members of the descent group, but husbands call each other by the kinship terms for older and younger brother (i.e. *acimwene* or *mpwanga*) according to the seniority of their wives. Similarly undifferentiated in kinship terms are the wives of all men of the descent group, who call each other 'sister'.

The husband is expected to work in his wife's garden, to help his mother-in-law, and also, in the early stages of marriage, to avoid her. His attitude to his father-in-law is one of respect, relaxing as time goes on. His attitude to his wife's brother is also one of respect, which covers feelings of latent hostility. Although husband and wife's brother co-operate in affairs relating to the woman and her children (e.g. they jointly consult the diviner in case of illness, and the brother-in-law hears grievances the husband may have against his wife), there are elements of conflict arising from their competition for the affection of the woman and her children.

Patrilocal marriages are the rule in certain cases. The village headman commonly has his wife in his own village. At his death his widow may return to her own village, but if her daughters have married locally she may stay, and one of her sons, as warden of his sisters, will also stay and marry patrilocally, as did his father, the headman. Thus a new matrilineal descent group, linked to that of the headman by a patrilineal link, develops. In every generation the number of separate but related matrilineal descent groups would double, and at such a rate of proliferation it might be expected that any village would contain many family groups. In fact, however, most members of a village can trace their descent from a common ancestress removed not more than about five generations. There are two reasons for this degree of homogeneity in the kin-grouping in the villages. One is that the villages tend to split up as they become too large and complex. The other is that the introduction of a new matrilineal descent group is often avoided by a cross-cousin marriage by the headman of the village or the warden of a sorority group.

There is a joking-relationship between cross-cousins, that is, for example, between the village headman's children and his sisters' children. The latter, as members of his descent group, have interests and loyalties opposed to those of his own children. Although there is a strong tradition of cross-cousin marriage, such marriages are said to be likely to be unstable.

Betrothal and Marriage

Child betrothal was common among the Yao. Acceptance of a loin-cloth and the wearing of it was token of betrothal, giving the groom exclusive rights over the girl.[1] The negotiations for an adult marriage are conducted by senior matrilineal kinsmen of the parties, who at the subsequent ceremony act as witnesses or sureties to the marriage. Usually the senior is the mother's brother, and the junior the brother. The act of validation, the *Cingomo* rite, takes place some time after the husband and wife have been living together. They meet in the hut of the woman for the rite, which consists in eating two pots of porridge, prepared by the female relatives of each party. The man's people bring a cockerel and the woman's a hen for relish. The exchange of food symbolizes the exchange of members of each matrilineal kin group, which is

[1] Macdonald, 1882, vol. i, p. 118; Johnston, 1897, pp. 411–13.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

the significance of this formulation of his position is clear. It is when he shows partiality that the village under him is likely to break up. If he sides with his children his matrilineal kin are almost sure to move out; if he sides with his matrilineal kin, his children are likely either to return to their matrilineal village or, if they are adult, split off to set up a village of their own. The situation is precarious for the headman and it is very difficult for him to avoid a split in the village if he cannot keep the two opposed groups at peace.

My investigations show that few villages have contained patrilaterally-linked groups through the lives of two village headmen, unless these groups were descended from slaves. When the headman dies his successor assumes his name and social rôle. He also assumes the position of father towards the remaining children, who are in fact his cross-cousins. But his relationship towards them is not the same as that of father to children. The intimate link of the blood tie has been lost and the relationship becomes formalized. As more and more headmen succeed the genealogical link between the patrilaterally-linked groups and the dominant matrilineage becomes more and more remote, and the relationship becomes more and more casual. What usually happens is that shortly after the death of the headman and father, the patrilaterally-linked group takes exception to what the new headman does or says and moves off to found a village of its own. The case history I quoted earlier [1] brought this out clearly. The new headman had had intercourse with the wives of his 'son'. The son complained to the arbitrators in the dispute that 'he should have been as a father to me, and he is not'. The result was that the son refused compensation, and moved out of the village with his sisters to build on his own. When this happens the father-son relationship between the two villages is preserved and perpetuated, but the link is entirely formal and co-operation between them is limited to mutual attendance at funerals.

Patrilaterally-linked Groups as the Legacy of Slavery

Slave-groups in a village are usually linked patrilaterally to the dominant lineage. This is because the headman who was usually the captor of the slaves kept the women as concubines. They were given quasi-child status in the village, so that their children

[1] 'The Split of Cikumba Village', see Chap. V, p. 127.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

when I visited it in 1947.[1] The basic structure of this village is set out in Diagram 5. Here the headman[2] was the last surviving member of the dominant matrilineage. The founder of the village, his mother's brother, had thirteen slave concubines. Some of these were barren but others produced children to give this complex structure. In this village the 55 huts were arranged in 16 different affiliations. The details are set out in Table XXIX. These groups were held together by Mpumbe IV, old, blind and doddering as he was. The virtual leader of the village was his elder brother's son, a man in his late forties or early fifties. When Mpumbe died, late in 1948, the people said that it was because of the sorcery of his brother's son who wished to take over the name of the village. This led to a dispute, which ended in the brother's son's leaving to found a new village about 15 miles away. A distant sister's son, as I have said, succeeded to the headmanship, and the reduced village was reunited under this new leader.

However, this is an extremely unusual type of village as most villages, if they are not simple matrilineal groups, have only one patrilaterally-linked group living with them. The reasons for this are firstly, that if patrilaterally-linked matrilineages develop at all in the modern villages, they move out very soon after the death of their progenitor, and, secondly, that there are very few of the old slave-raiders' villages left intact.

Cross-cousin and Other Kinds of Intra-village Marriages

A most important factor in the welding of patrilaterally-linked groups to the dominant matrilineage is marriage. The tradition of cross-cousin marriage is very strong among the Yao. A person may marry either type of cross-cousin but in practice preference is given to a father's sister's daughter—i.e. the woman is married to her mother's brother's son. There is a special term for cross-cousins, *asiwani*, which is used by either male or female talking to either sex. Between cross-cousins, especially cross-sexually, there is a joking-relationship which may vary all the way from ribald joking to sexual advances. Some of my male informants say that sexual intercourse may take place between cross-cousins

[1] See also Chap. VI, p. 161, and Chap. III, p. 59.

[2] He died late in 1948 and was succeeded by a distant 'sister's son' from the village of his perpetual son, Ngongondo.

[Text continues on p. 199]

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

'if the women are stupid enough to allow it'. The kinship terminology is consistent with the assumption that every man marries his cross-cousin, except that the father's sister's husband is not called 'father-in-law', but 'father'. The mother's brother's wife is called *akwegwe* (parent-in-law). The husband of a cross-cousin is called *mpwao* (younger brother), on the reasoning that if a man does not marry his cross-cousin, then his younger brother will. Dr. Meredith Sanderson told me that it was once the custom for a man to ask a prospective wife's cross-cousin before he proposed marriage because it was assumed that the woman's cross-cousin had first right to her hand. As far as I could ascertain this politeness is no longer observed.

The children of cross-cousins are called 'my children'. In addition to this a person calls his mother's mother's brother's son or mother's father's sister's son, 'father', and his mother's mother's brother's daughter or mother's father's sister's daughter, 'female father', a term which he applies also to his father's sister.

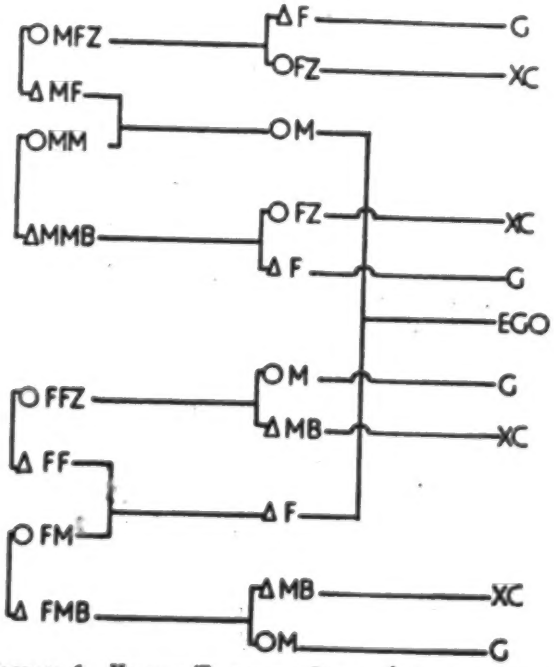

DIAGRAM 6. KINSHIP TERMS FOR PARENTS' CROSS-COUSINS.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

601 A person calls his father's mother's brother's daughter and father's
605 father's sister's daughter, 'mother'; his father's mother's brother's son or his father's father's sister's son, 'mother's brother'. Diagram 6 illustrates this. This is consistent with the assumption that each parent has married his cross-cousin.

582 Conversation with informants gives the impression that cross-cousin marriages are very common. They say, for example, that every man's first marriage ought to be to his cross-cousin. But in fact, of 103 first marriages, only 15 per cent were to real or classificatory cross-cousins, though 21 per cent were to other types of kinsmen. Marriages to other types of kinsmen are loosely called cross-cousin marriages, and often what has been called a cross-cousin marriage in conversation turns out to be marriage to a cross-cousin's daughter or something similar. This may be the reason why casual conversation leads one to imagine that cross-cousin marriage is so frequent.

601 But cross-cousinship is particularly significant when seen in
605 relation to village structure. Typically, villages, if they are not
613 built around a simple matrilineage, are composed of a dominant matrilineage and one or more lineages linked patrilaterally to it. Sometimes there are groups in a village which are connected by a patrilateral link to a matrilineage which is in turn linked patrilaterally to the dominant lineage. In other words, there are some lineages connected by a double patrilateral link to the dominant lineage. But this is not common. These linked groups have arisen because one or more of the men of the dominant lineage have brought their wives to live in their village. The set of kinship terms applied to members of the linked lineage by members of the dominant lineage are shown in Diagram 7. We have already seen that Ego, whether man or woman, calls his or her mother's mother's brother's son or daughter 'father' or 'female father'. This usage is consistent with the assumption that one's mother ought to have married her mother's brother's son so that the mother's maternal uncle's son should be called 'father'. On the same reasoning, one's mother's mother's brother's daughter should be one's father's sister and the appropriate term 'female father' is accordingly applied. Because uxorilocal marriage is the custom, Ego's mother's mother's brother's son marries out of the village and his children belong to another lineage. The children of Ego's mother's mother's

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

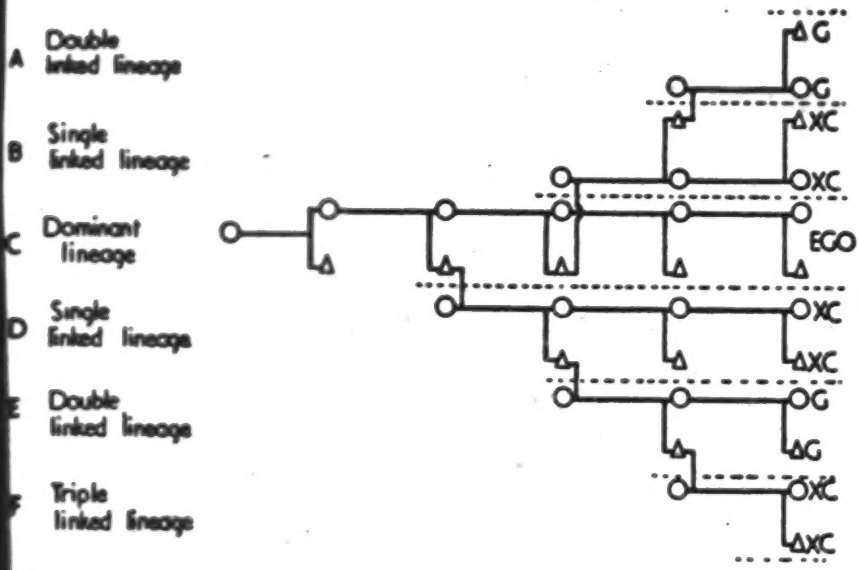

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DIAGRAM 7. KINSHIP TERMS BETWEEN DOMINANT LINEAGE AND PATRILATERALLY-LINKED GROUPS.

brother's daughter, however, are members of the linked lineage and they are called 'cross-cousin' by Ego and members of the dominant lineage in Ego's generation. The children of 'cross-cousins' are called 'my children'. Hence, Ego and those in his generation in the dominant lineage call all those in the first descending generation in the linked lineage 'my children'.

I have used as an example a lineage which is linked to Ego's lineage through his mother's mother's brother. But the kinship terminology is unaltered if the link occurs in any ascending generation. In Diagram 7 I have set out the kinship terms applied by the dominant lineage to members in the linked lineage where the connection is through Ego's mother's mother's mother's brother.

The argument would run as follows:

Ego's MM calls Ego's MMMBD cross-cousin.
Therefore Ego's M calls Ego's MMMBD female father;
therefore Ego's M calls Ego's MMMBDD cross-cousin;
therefore Ego calls Ego's MMMBDD female father;
therefore Ego calls Ego's MMMBDDD cross-cousin.

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

To Ego therefore, in a lineage linked through one patrilateral link:

Any person in the first ascending generation is 'father' or 'female father'.
Any person in the same generation is 'cross-cousin'.
Any person in the first descending generation is 'child'.

Those in the second ascending generation are called 'grandparent' and those in the second descending generation are called 'grandchildren'. By the merging of alternate generations, those in the second ascending and second descending generation may also be called 'cross-cousin'.

Where the subsidiary lineage is connected to the dominant lineage through two patrilateral links the kinship terms for siblings is applied to Ego's generation. In Diagram 7 the linked lineage marked A is connected to the dominant lineage through Ego's MMBS. Ego calls his mother's mother's brother's son 'father' and, therefore, calls his mother's mother's brother's sons' children by the appropriate sibling terms.

If a subsidiary lineage were connected through three patrilateral links the kinship nomenclature would be the same as if there were only one link. Lineages connected to dominant lineages through two or more patrilateral links are very rare. Most subsidiary lineages are connected through one patrilateral link only. In any village the generation differences between members of dominant and subsidiary lineages tend to be obscured. The Yao tend to see the component lineages as wholes, and therefore speak of the relationships between members of the dominant lineage and members of the subsidiary lineages in general as 'cross-cousinship' (*cisuwani*). It is only in special situations that the exact relationship becomes important.

The pattern of behaviour between cross-cousins is consistent with this view of their rôles in the make-up of a village. In the typical Yao village there are two or three groups who are united in their extra-village affairs but opposed in internal relationships. Their hostility to each other comes to the surface at the slightest provocation, but they are, nevertheless, co-villagers. They are kin and yet not kin, because the Yao look upon kinship as primarily matrilineal. They talk of the link through the father as 'not proper kinship'. The hostility between the members of the different cross-cousin groups in the village is dissipated

2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

in a joking-relationship which is more intense between men and women. Men and women in Yao public life always behave distantly to each other; hence joking-relationships are most intense between male and female cross-cousins. The joking-relationships between cross-cousins of the same sex is much more subdued and limited. The village headman himself, if he is not the actual father of the cross-cousins, is likely to be the butt of most of this. His visits to the huts of his cross-cousins to give them irksome instructions is an especial occasion for this sort of joking. Cikoja ordered his female cross-cousins to sweep a site for my tent when I first went to his village. I was most embarrassed by the insults that were hurled at his head during this procedure, but he took it all calmly and said nothing. The hostility inherent in the headman–villager relationship, together with the opposition between the dominant matrilineage and the patrilaterally-linked groups, provided an opportunity *par excellence* for joking. Thus the joking between cross-cousins in the village context is a means whereby the hostility between the component groups is dissipated and the harmony within the village maintained.

The groups are, of course, welded more closely by cross-cousin marriages which are not only allowed but prescribed. By cross-cousin marriage a man from one of the component groups of the village may marry and yet not leave the village. He may in fact have to build a hut in another part of the village, but this is obviously not the separation that uxorilocal marriage entails. At the same time, in a village where the headmen have married their cross-cousins, there will be fewer patrilaterally-linked groups, so that the village will be less complex and consequently less liable to internal dissension. If cross-cousin marriages were not practised, and if the children of the headmen and senior members of the linked lineages did not return to their matrilineal villages on the death of one of their parents, the intra-village situation could in time become extremely complex. Assuming that each linked group had at least one male member married virilocally, the number of related groups would double itself in each generation.[1] However, because of limiting economic factors I describe later and the disruptive social processes within villages, this situation never occurs in practice, and Yao villages on the whole remain relatively simple in structure.

[1] See detailed argument and diagram in *Seven Tribes*, 333.

593 601 The children of maternal uncles (C 6 and 8) and of paternal aunts (C 2 and 4) are called cousins *achaniemi* (*sing. mwiemi*), and, conversely, the children of maternal aunts (C 7 and 9) and of paternal uncles (C 1 and 3) are called "brothers and sisters"; one would address the other as "*chemwali*" or "*achimwene*," but either is taboo to the other.

601 It is interesting, therefore, to note that cousinship is of two kinds: the relationship between a child and his maternal aunts' children or his paternal uncles' children is *wuako*, whereas the relationship with his maternal uncles' children or his paternal aunts' children is *uniwani*.

[611] It is easily understood why the maternal aunts' children are considered as brothers and sisters, as among the Yao, matrilineal descent is the rule, the children taking the clan of

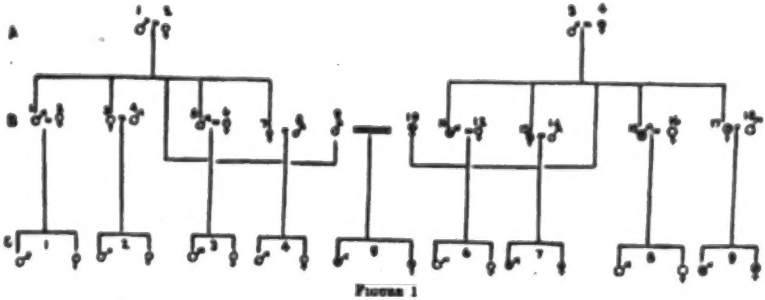

FIGURE 1

the mother. In the diagram, this is indicated in black. That the paternal uncles' children bear the same relationship would seem to indicate that matrilineal descent is not absolute but that dual descent from both parents is recognised.

Children C 5 may not marry C 7 and 9, nor C 1 and 3. In the case of the former, this is because persons of the same clan may not marry, but in the case of the latter, no such reason is given but they are simply said to be brothers and sisters. Children C 5 may [582] marry their cousins C 6 and 8 and C 2 and 4, but this is not very common as it is said such marriages are always unhappy.

601 604 The wife of a maternal uncle (B 12) speaks of her nephew by marriage (C 5) as *mwono*, husband, because, in the event of her husband's death, this nephew would inherit from him and he might marry the widow.

601 A parent-in-law or child-in-law is called *mkwegwe* indifferently. Paternal and maternal grand-parents, and great-uncles and aunts are all called *ambuje;* a grand-child, *chizukulu.*

The words *atati* and *amao* commonly mean father and mother, but, as given above, there are other words for these two parents, whereas *atati* and *amao* are applied to certain aunts

3: Stanmus D-5 (ca. 1912) 1922 FT7 Yao FT7

Witch-medicine. The making of medicine against people has been shown to occupy an essential place in *usuwi*, and it plays an important part in all occultism. So by insensible grades, the ordinary use of drugs in common diseases is reached, though it is probable that very much greater faith is placed in a packet of burnt roots put under the floor of the house than in the efficacy of any concoction taken by mouth.

There is a general belief that by medicine extra ability verging into supernatural power can be acquired. This power in a general sense is represented by the word *ukoma* and a man so possessed is spoken of as *munthu wa komala*. The desire for increased power may be a perfectly natural one, such as a desire for influence and popularity as a chief, or on the other hand, the power of *usuwi* may be aimed at, or again, the knowledge of magic medicine for thieving or for any other practice. *Ukoma* is, therefore, a relative matter. The necessary medicine or initiation into the understanding of magic can be purchased from persons already practitioners, the honest herbalist merging by imperceptible degrees into the most criminal witch-doctor. A single practitioner may prescribe a charcoal dressing for an ulcer, exorcise an evil spirit by a vapor bath, sell medicine to enable the buyer to win a case at court, arrange medicine on a pathway to act as a selective love potion, or prescribe a drug to change a man into a lion.

Deserving of special mention are the people who thieve by the aid of medicine which they have either purchased or prepared themselves. Such a man is called *chitaka* and the medicine *mtela wa chitaka*. The active principle of this medicine is said to be prepared from the tail of a hyaena, an animal which is said to be able to enter a house where people are sleeping and kill and carry off the fowls without waking the occupants. The medicine is often carried in a hyaena's tail. The *chitaka* is supposed to approach the house he would rob and chewing some medicine in the mouth, gently blow towards it to put everyone to sleep. The door is supposed to unfasten itself and the thief is free to take what he wishes. He is even said to kill, cook, and eat food in the house while the inmates remain unconscious. A special characteristic of the *chitaka* is that whatever he lays his hands on in the house he must remove, though he does not want it, so that in the morning many unwieldy, useless objects may be found outside the hut.

There are many other magic medicines. One of these, *kuunga*, if introduced into a village, will cause the illness and death of some inmate. Anyone handling the body of the sick man or the corpse after death, sickens and dies until the whole village is wiped out. There is a man serving a life sentence now at the Central Prison, Zomba, who was convicted of having caused the death of many people in a village in Angoniland. He is said cheerfully to have admitted the power of his medicine.

Medicine made from a cousin is supposed to be efficacious in various ways. The blood of a cousin is instilled into the ear for otorrhoea. Drinking the water which has been used by a cousin to wash his face relieves intestinal colic. Medicine is made from the hairs of the beard of a cousin or from an *mbilo* and used for chest trouble.

5: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1948) 1949 FT7 Yao FT7

genous group, in which his jurisdiction over one part of the village arises from his position as the warden of a sorority-group, and that which he exercises over the other sorority-group derives partly from his position as a non-matrilineal relative and partly from his own personal qualities. The warden of the second sorority-group is the headman's own son and it is he who takes over all the functions proper to that position, but the successor to the headmanship is a man's sister's son, usually, though not invariably, the first-born son of the eldest sister. Each village headman in turn brings his wife to live in his village and each headman's wife in turn tends to set up a fresh group which is of a different lineage affiliation from that of the headman. In addition to this the warden of the sorority-group formed from the first headman's children tends in due course to live patrilocally and the children of his wife set up yet another foreign group in the village. Hence, theoretically, with each generation the number of opposed groups in a village doubles itself, and in a few generations, were this to continue, the position would become extremely complex. In fact a village of long standing is seen to be composed of a central lineage group to which the headman belongs, and a series of other lineage groups related to the headman's lineage group through one or other of the past and present headmen of that village. Such groups of different lineage make-up are usually mutually opposed and are held together only by the combined influences of a weak patrilineal connexion with the headman's lineage and the personality of the present headman.

This situation is clearly an uneasy one for the headman. His wife is looked upon as a stranger and is often made to feel it. The headman's sorority-group often expresses its hostility and jealousy towards her. The children of the two groups are on no easier terms. They call each other ' cross-cousin ' (*asiwasi*) and are expected to marry one another. At the same time the hostility between them is formulated in joking relationships. This critical situation of the headman is made clear to him on the day of his succession. One headman was told: ' As you have got wives, do not listen to what they say. They may be lying. Sometimes they will quarrel with your sisters and say that your sisters have been insulting you. This is false. When you hear these reports you may be unfair to your sisters and the people will say that you have broken your village through listening to nonsense.' Thus when conflicts arise between members of a village the headman is in a peculiar position and it is difficult for him to remain impartial. In such a situation the tendency is to call in an outsider to try to settle the differences. Sometimes these differences are patched up and the village continues as a unit. But, particularly after the death of the first village headman, the tendency is for one of the groups to move away to a completely new area, there to set up a unit of its own.

I quote an actual case to illustrate this procedure: